United Nations A/57/7/Add.15

General Assembly

Distr.: General
29 October 2002

Original: English

Fifty-seventh session
Agenda item 112 and 90 (b)

Programme budget for the biennium 2002-2003

Training and research

United Nations Institute for Training and Research

Sixteenth report of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions

1. The Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions has considered the report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR) (A/57/479). During its consideration of the report, the Committee met with representatives of the Secretary-General who provided additional information.

2. The report was submitted pursuant to General Assembly resolution 56/208 of 21 December 2001, in which the Secretary-General was requested to clarify why UNITAR did not benefit from rental rates and maintenance costs similar to those enjoyed by other organizations affiliated with the United Nations, such as the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR) and the United Nations Research Institute for Social Development (UNRISD) and further requested the Secretary-General to submit proposals on how to waive or reduce the rental rates and maintenance costs charged to UNITAR with a view to alleviating its current financial difficulties, which are aggravated by the practice of charging commercial rates.

3. UNITAR has been charged rent by the United Nations for premises it has occupied in Geneva since 1 January 1989 and in New York since 1 October 1996 (ibid., para. 3).

4. In accordance with paragraph 1 of General Assembly resolution 47/227 of 8 April 1993, the UNITAR building in New York was transferred to the United Nations in return for the cancellation of debt of the Institute and coverage of its financial obligations for 1992 in the amount of $15,989,000 (see A/C.5/47/82). In accordance with the same resolution, in the biennium 1998-1999 the amount of $283,215, consisting of negative balances on special-purpose grant projects and related to activities undertaken before 1992, was written off against United Nations reserves.

02-66603 (E) 011102

5. The Advisory Committee notes that UNITAR has been able to continue its existing activities with no deficit and to expand its activities, operating exclusively on voluntary contributions and special-purpose grants. The Committee also notes that the analysis of the financial situation of the UNITAR General Fund shows that the Institute was in a position to continue paying for rent and maintenance, from its own resources, as it had done for the period from 1994 to 1998 (see A/57/479, para. 12).

6. The total annual requirements for rent and the maintenance of office space in New York and Geneva amount to $112,482. With the addition of messenger, security, shuttle and cleaning services provided by the United Nations Office at Geneva (amounting to $34,000 annually), annual requirements for UNITAR would amount to $146,482 (or $293,000 biennially). Current unpaid bills as at 30 September 2002 amount to $310,974, consisting of $270,869 owed to the United Nations and $40,105 to The Fondation immobilière pour organisations internationales, which manages the building in Geneva (ibid., para. 15).

7. As also indicated in the report, UNIDIR and UNRISD enjoyed benefits from reduced rental rates and maintenance costs (ibid., para. 16).

8. With regard to UNIDIR, pursuant to General Assembly resolution 39/148 H of 17 December 1984, the Institute receives a subvention from the regular budget of the United Nations towards meeting the costs of the Director and the staff of the Institute. UNIDIR is charged a rate of 5 per cent by the United Nations for administrative and support costs for the financial services provided to the Institute by the United Nations Office at Geneva (see ibid., para. 17).

9. In connection with UNRISD, the Advisory Committee notes that the Institute is accommodated free of charge and that it pays for programme support at the reduced rate of 8 per cent (ibid., para. 18).

10. The Advisory Committee also notes that the Secretariat is not in position to propose a waiver of the rental rates and maintenance costs charged to UNITAR without the express decision of the General Assembly (ibid., para. 19).

11. Should the General Assembly decide that the Institute should be provided with office space by the United Nations on a rent-free and maintenance-free basis, an additional provision of $293,000 would be required over and above the resources proposed under section 27, Management and central support services, of the programme budget for the biennium 2002-2003 (A/56/6 (Sect. 27)). This provision would represent a charge against the contingency fund and would be considered in the context of the consolidated statement to be presented by the Secretary-General in December 2002 in accordance with the provisions of Assembly resolution 42/211 of 21 December 1987.